

NEBRASKA SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

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MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

2012 Nebraska Children's Summit

WHEN: Monday, August 27 – Wednesday, August 29, 2012

WHERE: Younes Conference Center – Kearney

WHAT: The Children's Summit is a statewide conference sponsored by the Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative and the Nebraska Supreme Court where attendees will spend over two days focusing on improving the child welfare in the court system. Specific educational topic areas include:

- infants and toddlers
- older youth
- educational outcomes
- parents' legal representation
- engaging families

This is the third Statewide Summit sponsored by the Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative and the Nebraska Supreme Court – Original Summit Nebraska City 2006, Second Summit Grand Island 2009.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Center for Children Families and the Law manages the Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative for the Nebraska Supreme Court.

ATTENDING:

Judges, attorneys, case workers, mental health practitioners, educators and children's service providers. There are 450 individuals currently registered for the Summit.

**registrations are at maximum capacity and participants are being wait-listed at this time.*

GENERAL EVENT HIGHLIGHTS:

Monday, August 27 Noon – 1:30

Opening Presentation and Awards

- Chief Justice Heavican, Nebraska Supreme Court
- Governor Dave Heineman
- Commissioner Roger Breed, Department of Education

Tuesday, August 28 11:30 – 1:30

Nebraska Legislative Panel

- Sen. Kathy Campbell
- Sen. Annette Dubas
- Sen. Mike Gloor
- Sen. Bob Krist
- Michelle Chaffee

Wednesday, August 29 11:15 – 12:30

Closing Program - “Three Little Words”

Ashley Rhodes-Courter spent almost ten years in foster care, living in 14 different homes before being adopted. Her best-selling memoir, “Three Little Words” chronicles her experiences in care and she uses her story as a tool to bring hope and inspiration to others. Ashley is currently an internationally recognized child welfare advocate, graduate student (obtaining her MSW), and foster parent.

Final Remarks

Chief Justice Heavican

MORE INFORMATION:

Web site Link: www.throughtheeyes.org

Conference Agenda Link: http://www.throughtheeyes.org/files/2012_ncs_agenda.pdf

contact Melissa Townsend at mtownsend3@unl.edu or 402.472.3292

Message from Chief Justice Mike Heavican:

“Our democratic society is built upon a foundation of government that includes three branches. The judicial branch is committed to providing courts that are open and accessible to all, including those who must rely on others to protect their interests -- particularly children.

To this end, since 2006, the Nebraska Supreme Court has supported an initiative to implement recognized best court practices. The purpose of this "Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative" is to improve the court system for abused/neglected and foster children in the state. It brings together judges, family support workers, school representatives, mediators, parents and their attorneys, county attorneys, guardians ad litem, court-appointed special advocates, former foster youth, and community representatives.

The initiative is based on the premise that Nebraska's judges can have a profound impact on improving the lives of children involved with the courts.

Approximately 25 teams across the state have implemented best practices in local courts. Through the Initiative, children have been encouraged to attend and participate in hearings affecting their welfare. Key legal issues are identified early in the process, which assists the parents in receiving services quickly and helps improve the stability of the child's environment. The Initiative collects data that was not previously available, allowing for identification of areas of concern and measurement of progress.

The Nebraska Supreme Court will once again sponsor the Nebraska Children's Summit in Kearney from August 27-29, 2012.

The Summit brings together stakeholders to focus on the courts' role in protecting our children.

The court system has a special interest in protecting the families and children we encounter. Without the constructive intervention of the court system, the future justice and freedom of court-involved children and their families will be in jeopardy."

...Chief Justice Mike Heavican, May 1, 2012 – Law Day

PHOTOS and INTERVIEWS:

Individual interviews can be arranged through Summit staff. Photos are permissible.

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Janice K. Walker, State Court Administrator
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